



The purpose of this technical assistance brief is to offer guidance to fall prevention coalition leaders in building or strengthening sustainable coalitions that pool resources from a wide range of organizations that are concerned with falls. This brief provides advice about the composition and size of your coalition, as well as ways to recruit new coalition members.

#### **Identifying Potential Members:**

A crucial step in creating a successful and long-standing coalition is to identify and recruit stakeholders to participate. When selecting coalition members, the lead coordinator should think broadly about potential members and not just recruit natural allies who share a common vision or a common professional discipline. Recruiting only a narrow group of individuals will guarantee under-representation from the community and limit the capacity and impact of coalition efforts.

Instead, coalition leaders should look for a broad diversity of partners that address the different aspects of fall prevention. They should consider potential members who can extend the reach of the organization into additional segments of the community, as well as those who have a vested interest in or are affected by falls. Additionally, coalition membership should include individuals who are going to be most directly affected by the plans and decisions of the coalition.

Finally, coalition leaders should consider the resources that potential members could bring to the table; none should remain untapped. Different coalition members will offer various resources, such as volunteers, professional expertise and knowledge, access to influential community leaders, credibility and notoriety, or help with collecting or disseminating information about falls and fall prevention in their community.

#### **Hold a Brainstorming Session:**

While the lead coordinators should be well positioned to identify and invite individuals to serve as coalition members, they will not necessarily be aware of all potential participants. A brainstorming session among coalition leaders and colleagues will help identify potential members and collect their direct contact information. For example, someone already working with the coalition may have a relationship with influential individuals at the local hospital, fire department, HMO, Area Agency on Aging, etc. These individuals would be most effective in recruiting potential members identified in the brainstorming session.

#### **Conduct a Potential Member Inventory:**

Another useful strategy is to create an inventory of local fall prevention resources and then call key individuals and professionals from those entities to interview them about the resources that they can provide. This process helps identify and expand the pool of potential coalition members beyond the “usual suspects.” Moreover, it acts as a starting point to assess fall prevention resources in the community. And, it can be used in the future as a community-based directory of fall prevention resources for coalition activities or events.





**Approaching Potential Members:**

To increase the interest and commitment of potential coalition members, the lead coordinator should clearly outline the benefits of coalition membership to each potential member. The invitation for participation should be presented as a “partnership,” with a focus on how the coalition will help its members reach mutual goals and benefits. Besides membership benefits, potential coalition members must understand what is expected from them, as well as their role in the coalition. It is helpful to send potential members a description of their role in the coalition, including time and resource commitments, roles and responsibilities, and committed support of the organization’s vision and goals. When inviting potential members, you will want to include the following:

- name of the coalition;
- mission and goals;
- recent activities;
- invitation to become a coalition member;
- responsibilities of coalition members;
- benefits of participation (e.g., promotion and acknowledgment of their support in your efforts, cooperation and shared efforts toward the desired results, etc.).

**Coalition Size:**

One challenge is to select members who will work well together in a coalition that is manageable and cooperative, rather than cumbersome or unwieldy. To generate support and interest, the lead coordinator should initially create a coalition of approximately 15-20 people. This number allows for member attrition; at the same time, the group is large enough to make decisions and carry out activities, but not so large that it will not be productive.

**Incorporating a broad-based, diverse group of core members of the coalition will help ensure that your program gains recognition, as well as to gain leverage and also build support for long-term sustainability.**

**Summary of Key Points:**

- Think broadly; avoid under-representation and coalition dominance by one sector of the falls prevention community.
- Conduct an inventory of fall prevention resources in the community to identify potential coalition members (see appendix list).
- Identify contact information for new potential members early on.
- Keep the coalition size manageable – between 15 to 20 members.
- Call potential members to gather information and to invite them to join your coalition.
- When inviting new members, stress how coalition membership will benefit them.

List of Potential Coalition Members

Adult education programs	Home modification programs
Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)	Home owners associations
Assistive technology centers, professional groups	Hospitals
Caregivers	Independent Living Center
Case managers	Journalists/local media representatives
Centers for independent living	Local businesses (e.g., contractor, pharmacist, etc.)
Consumers	Local civic associations
Durable medical equipment suppliers	Local government (e.g. health, social services, public safety, aging, parks and recreation, housing departments, veterans administration, etc.)
Exercise program representatives	Local policymakers/elected officials
Local colleges/universities	Medicare and Medicaid regional representatives
Existing coalitions (e.g. health promotion)	Multi-Purpose Senior Service Programs (MSSP or Linkages)
Foundations/charitable organizations	Regional disability centers
Health professional associations	Religious organizations
Health services providers (e.g., doctors, nurses, occupational/physical therapists, pharmacists)	Rehab engineering professionals
HMOs	Senior centers
Home health care agencies (e.g., visiting nurse associations)	Senior housing facilities